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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a case study that examined Australian primary teachers' perceptions of school-based curriculum development (SBCD). The study was conducted at Blackpool Primary School, a Catholic school in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Data were derived from participant observation, a teacher questionnaire, interviews with all full-time teachers, and followup focus interviews with two of the teachers between August 1987 and June 1988. Findings indicate that despite the presence of support structures and a high level of teacher involvement in curriculum planning, several initiatives did not find expression in the classroom. Teachers did not see implementation as part of their participation in SBCD, nor did they relate SBCD to personal benefits. They also reported that they lacked time and sometimes made decisions based on what they believed was best for their students. It is recommended that the administration explore the link between curriculum planning and implementation with students in teacher-preparation programs. Four tables are included. (LMI)

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DOES OUR REACH EXCEED OUR GRASP? A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.

Michael Bezzina, Catholic College of Education Sydney.

> The big barrier is time. Teachers at my school get between half an hour and three quarters of an hour release time per week. In my three quarters of an hour I have to : program, plan, correct, organise, clean, write up my day book, organise Mass for Friday, devise a liturgical dance for Wednesday's paraliturgy, plan the sports carnival, do some photocopying and go to the toilet! I'm just stating the sad fact that for many of us school based curriculum development is just another thing to do - however important.

From this Primary teacher's point of view, participation in school based curriculum development (SBCD) is an activity which is expected of teachers, one which is important, but which must compete for time with other important priorities. The view expressed raises some questions about her behaviour, and the behaviour of other teachers. Why, for example, does she choose to continue to be involved in SBCD despite the apparently conflicting demands on time and energy? What view does she have of her participation? How is this point of view related to the methods and extent of her participation in SBCD? The case study reported in this paper was part of a larger study which sought answers to some of these questions, and in particular those related to teachers' views of their participation in SBCD.

The significance of addressing this teachers' point of view is that there is considerable agreement among writers using this frame of reference that "what teachers do is affected by what they think" (Clark and Yinger, 1977). Teachers' subjective viewpoints have been shown to be important in research into areas such as classroom practice (Woods, 1977), school autonomy (Reynolds and Sullivan, 1982), innovation (Fullan, 1982), and teacher socialisation (Mardle and Walker, 1980).

In this paper, the way in which teachers view themselves and their situation will be referred to as teacher perceptions. It seems reasonable to expect that these perceptions would have particular applications in the case of participation in SBCD. For example, two teachers in similar situations with objectively the same abilities may have more or less positive perceptions of self and situation, leading to different levels of participation in SBCD.

Research to date on teacher participation in SBCD has focussed largely on the decision-making dimension of that participation. This study takes a somewhat broader view, where, based on a review of the literature, and a process of consultation with experts (Bezzina, 1989), participation in SBCD is viewed as being made up of five groups of behaviours: gathering background information, planning, implementing, evaluating and working with others. SBCD itself is defined as a process in which some or all of the members of a school community plan, implement and/or evaluate an aspect or aspects of the curriculum offering of the school. This may involve adapting an existing curriculum, adopting it unchanged, or creating new curriculum. SBCD is a collaborative effort which should not be confused with the individual efforts of teachers or administrators operating outside the boundaries of a collaboratively accepted framework.

In analysing the objective factors which influence teacher participation in SBCD, the significance of organisational variables is apparent, and well documented (e.g. Cohen and Harrison, 1982). It is at the subjective level of perceptions, however, that the importance of the individual factors emerges, because these perceptions are unique to the individual, may be independent of notions of objective reality, and have been demonstrated in a range of fields to be significant influences on action, although the way in which they operate in influencing teacher participation in SBCD is not fully understood (Bezzina, 1988,1989).

Wilson (1977:247) argued that human behaviour cannot be understood without understanding the framework within which "subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions". As part of the process of addressing the questions which have prompted this study, a need clearly exists, therefore, to determine the nature of teachers' perceptions of their participation in SBCD within a particular context. This paper discusses some aspects of a case study which takes up this focus. The paper has two purposes. The first is to describe SBCD practices in a particular school, and teachers' perceptions of their participation in SBCD in that context. The second is to explore possible relationships between perceptions and actual participation.

THE NATURE OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH ADOPTED

Because the type of data required in this study was not likely to be available to the outsider "occasionally coming in and talking to people", (Wilson, 1977: 254) a modified form of the role of participant observer was adopted within an approach known as condensed fieldwork (Stenhouse, 1981:33). This may be defined as a form

of data gathering which requires the researcher to become a participant in the system being observed while structuring data collection according to explicit theoretical constructs.

> As fieldwork becomes condensed, the participant observer role in [the] full sense is attenuated and observation is located in a study where the main weight is carried by interviewing. Observation often provides cues for the agenda of interview or follows from remarks made by an interviewee.
> (Stenhouse, 1981: 33)

The aspirant participant role adopted in the present study was that of occasional relief teacher whose basic role as researcher was clearly understood by all staff members. The approach taken was suggested by Ball (1982b: 80) as a way of legitimating the researcher in the eyes of teachers.

The case study school was a small primary school with a full time staff of seven in the southern suburbs of Sydney, and is referred to as Blackpool Primary School (BPS). It is one of the 145 primary schools or departments within the Catholic Education system of the Archdiocese of Sydney. BPS was a single stream school with a fluctuating enrolment of around 220 during the period of the researcher's involvement. The school was not in receipt of any funds beyond the standard allocation, and it was staffed according to regular Catholic Education Office guidelines. 1988 was the Principal's third year in charge of Blackpool, and her third as a Principal. In terms of these characteristics, BPS was considered to be quite typical of the schools within the system.

As this case study was part of a larger study, a major purpose of which was theory testing, critical research questions were clearly in the mind of the researcher at the onset of work in the case study school. Data were gathered between August 1987 and June 1988 using both structured and unstructured methods, with the semi-structured interview and observation being the main methods. Interviews were conducted at two levels at BPS. Initially all full time classroom teachers were interviewed using a format which focussed on perceptions of the behaviours involved in participation in SBCD, the aids and barriers to participation and the costs and benefits of participation. Later in the research, and based on responses to a questionnaire tapping different aspects of perceptions, two focus teachers were chosen for a series of 5 weekly interviews dealing with actual involvement in SBCD. These two were chosen on the basis of their representing the most and least positive perceptions respectively.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF SBCD AT BLACKPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Table 1 categorises curriculum initiatives at BPS according to their focus, their source, and the participants involved. This table gives an indication of the opportunities available to staff to participate in SBCD, the extent to which the staff were involved in various initiatives, and the focus on different subject areas.

The initiatives noted in Table 1 are "major" initiatives, in that they were, for the most part, whole-school concerns. Most of them involved gathering background information or planning. This list does not include the various initiatives which involved the classroom implementation of plans made either within this time frame or prior to it, either by the whole staff, small groups of staff, or individuals. The resultant list of initiatives was, therefore, in terms of the definition adopted in this study, an underestimation of the extent of participation at the time of the study. In spite of this, the list of 16 initiatives is quite extensive.

Table 1 highlights the importance of the Principal, the significance of the (perhaps unexpected?) external influences on the school, and role of the Catholic nature of the school in the SBCD initiatives identified. The predominant place of the Principal as an initiator is clear, with a role in over half the initiatives. Only three other individual members of staff (the REC, Social Science Coordinator and the PAP) were responsible for SBCD initiatives during the period under consideration. The breakdown of initiatives also indicates the dominant role of staff in curriculum development, while parents and outside personnel (usually C.E.O. or C.A.E. staff) were quite frequently participants in this school.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF SBCD INITIATIVES AT BLACKPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Focus of initiatives	
Religious Education/Catholic philosophy of the school	6
Other subject specific initiatives:	
Language	3
Social Studies	2
Mathematics	1
Music	1
Other:	
Personal Development	1
Protective Behaviours	1
Discipline Policy	1
TOTAL	**16**
Initiator:	
Principal	
- reacting to external influences	5
- reacting to internal influences	1
- implementing staff priorities	3
- other	1
SUBTOTAL	**10**
Other	
- system initiative	1
- Religious Education Coordinator (REC)	2
- Primary Assistant Principal (PAP)	1
- Social Science Coordinator	1
- whole staff concern	1
SUBTOTAL	6
TOTAL	**16**
Participants (Number of initiatives in which each group were participants):	
Staff	16
Parents	6
Pupils	2
Outside personnel	5

Of the sixteen initiatives identified, 5 were a result of the Principal reacting to external influences (e.g. system priorities, availability of inservice, outcomes of further study) and an additional one was a result of a direct system initiative for school clusters to work on Language. Six of the sixteen initiatives identified in Table 1 concerned either Religious Education or the Catholic Philosophy of the school.

Particularly when viewed in the light of the tendency of Table 1 to underestimate the school's SBCD activity, there was a considerable number of initiatives in a wide range of areas in BPS in which teachers could, and did, become involved. During the period of observation there were approximately 30 weeks of school. The initiatives in Table 1 therefore represent, for some teachers, an average of more than one significant initiative every two weeks, and most of these had ongoing implications for teacher practice. If each had been fully and systematically implemented, the resultant demands on teacher time would have been great. However some initiatives did not survive the planning stage, or even the initial discussions. At times this was as a result of pressure on time, at times through apathy, and at times because of conscious decisions by individual teachers to deviate from policy.

Informal observation of classroom practice indicated that there was a disjunction between written documentation and practice. For example, in the area of language, the school policy was based on the principles of an early literacy project which had been sponsored by the diocese, and on process approaches to the teaching of language in particular. Both the researcher's observations and comments by the Principal would indicate that these principles were not always apparent in practice, despite the involvement of teachers in planning the curriculum.

In summary, there was a great deal of initiation of SBCD activity taking place at BPS, covering a range of subjects. All involved teachers. The Principal was the prime initiator although outside influences played a significant role in influencing her in this regard. Both observation and interview revealed that a number of initiatives failed to proceed beyond the discussion stage.

STRUCTURES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT BLACKPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

The structures in BPS which allowed SBCD to take place included the establishment by staff of a school set of priorities for curriculum development, regular staff meetings, the provision of time for SBCD activities, the link made between SBCD and staff development, and the use of the expertise of outside personnel.

Curriculum development at Blackpool Primary School was taking place within a set of priorities established through staff consultation at the commencement of the term of office of the present Principal. The outcome of this consultation was that it was decided to address the curriculum areas in the following order: discipline, Language, Religious Education, Mathematics, Music. The focus for 1988 was to be Mathematics, with Music for 1989. Table 1 reveals that this has not been rigidly followed, probably as a result of the impact of external influences. Discussion with the Principal indicated a possible need for reassessment of priorities:

> going to do nothing next year. In the plan the intention was to do Music in 1989.The Discipline policy has been going on for two and a half years and is still not being implemented. There's a lack of follow through....
>
> Maths is this year's priority. It will be a long process. I did intend writing a policy next year, but we'll be a couple of years before we get anywhere near that."

Here, in the case of the Discipline policy, and in the case of other initiatives like Language policy and Human Development discussed with teachers, is evidence of the fact that some initiatives had not proceeded to the implementation stage during the period of observation.

Curriculum issues were usually raised at the weekly staff meeting, although even finding a time for such meetings was seen to be hard when different members of the staff were completing part-time studies on three afternoons of the week during 1987. The Principal was seen by some staff as controlling the agenda of these meetings to a great extent. These staff made no mention of the open invitation to record matters of concern in the staff communication book, which was always available in the staff room. During an extended absence by the Principal, access to the agenda of these meetings was perceived by these staff members to be more open, when the Primary Assistant Principal solicited agenda items by circular.

Other time allowances for curriculum development were made by the Principal and the P.A.P. using their own administration release time to relieve teachers from face to face teaching. The same procedure was used to allow staff to attend inservice. The Principal commented that using administration time for relief worked imperfectly because the time could not always be guaranteed. She also saw a strong link between SBCD and staff development and so used the approved staff development days (where the schools in the system were allowed to ask pupils to stay at home) to allow staff to work on the school's specified curriculum priorities.

The Principal made extensive use of her contacts in tertiary institutions and at the Catholic Education Office to invite people to the school on both formal and informal bases. She said, "I get everyone I know in so that something might rub off." Such personnel had a role in initiatives in Social Science, Religious Education, and Mathematics. The Principal strongly encouraged staff in their own studies, both on a personal basis and through reports in the school Newsletter, although she did have some reservations about the extent to which formal studies were finding expression in professional practice.."I can't see evidence of anything anyone else [other than herself] has done being used."

The overview of SBCD structures revealed that they were generally supportive of participation in SBCD, through the provision of extra time and outside support. The role of the Principal was once again significant. The provision of support structures provided the opportunity for the extensive SBCD activities already noted. Having provided a description of the SBCD activities and support systems at BPS attention is now turned to a description of teachers' perceptions of their participation in these activities.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SBCD AT BLACKPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

In the course of interviews, teachers were asked to identify the behaviours that might be involved if they were participating in SBCD, the advantages and disadvantages of participation in SBCD and the aids and barriers to such participation.

Behaviours involved in participation in SBCD

Teachers' responses to this item are summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2. : TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE BEHAVIOURS REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION IN SBCD AT BPS.

(N=7)

Skill	**Number of times mentioned**
Background reading/examining previous practice/ examining needs/analysis of situation	5
Sequencing/organisation/coordination	3
Working/discussing with others	2
Evaluation of approaches	2
Document preparation	1

Perhaps the most telling aspect of this table is the absence of implementation as an aspect of participation in SBCD. Significantly, the four other "ways of participating in SBCD" used in the research can be identified in the responses above, namely gathering background information, planning, evaluating and working with others. Implementing, however, does not figure. This could be interpreted as representing a distinction between what happens in the classroom and the processes of SBCD in the minds of respondents.

The majority of teachers in the case study school nominated very short lists of behaviours at a very broad level of inclusiveness. No teacher identified more than three behaviours which were part of participating in SBCD. Two staff identified three, one nominated two and the remaining four identified only one activity. In a subsequent interview one of the focus teachers said that she couldn't think of any particular behaviours. Table 2 demonstrates that teachers thought of the behaviours involved in SBCD in very general terms. No teacher provided a list of activities which might have been considered to represent a comprehensive coverage of perticipation in SBCD. Perhaps they have not been equipped by either training or experience to discuss participation in SBCD in these terms.

Aids and barriers to participation

Responses in interviews were categorised according to the aids and barriers identified. The collated results are presented below in Table 3.

TABLE 3 : TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF AIDS AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN SBCD AT BPS (N=7)

Factor	Number of responses
AIDS	
Principal	6
Provision of time	4
School climate	4
Skills of staff	3
Part time study	1
BARRIERS	
Time	6
Conflicting priorities	5
Part time study	4
Staff burn out	4
No follow through	3
School structure(Single stream)	3
Poor consultancy process of outside advisers.	2

Table 3 demonstrates that, within BPS, the Principal was viewed by teachers as an important aid to participation in SBCD. This perception accords with the prominent role of the Principal as an initiator of SBCD which was identified earlier. It also links to the second perceived aid, the provision of time for SBCD, the Principal's role in which has been previously discussed. A number of staff commented on the improved situation since the current principal had arrived. A typical comment was:

> She (the current principal) will listen and give us more time to spend as a group, and that is working more...The previous principal thrashed it (SBCD) and thrashed it to the point that we became sick and tired of it - to the point that one even stood up in a staff meeting once and said, "I can't stand this any more. We've just had enough. We've done it." She was amazed. I don't know what went wrong there and I don't think she knew what went wrong. "

Staff had a generally positive view of themselves as a team. No-one indicated that they felt that the Principal, or the level of staff skills or the school climate in any way

inhibited SBCD. On the contrary, these figured among the most frequently mentioned aiding factors.

While there were positive perceptions of the amount of time being provided for SBCD (4 respondents), a greater number (6), viewed the lack of time as a barrier. Thus , a number of teachers viewed time as both an aid and a barrier. This may be seen to present something of an anomaly in a school where considerable effort was made to provide time, but needs to be seen in the context of the large number of initiatives undertaken. The perceptions of a need for time were not, however atypical. During the period of observation at BPS a survey was conducted by the C.E.O. (C.E.O. Sydney, 1988) to gather background data for staffing primary schools during 1989. In response to one question, 94.7 per cent of school staffs in the Archdiocese agreed that relief from face to face teaching should be provided for curriculum development and cooperative planning.

Related to this issue of lack of time are perceptions of competing priorities (6 responses) and staff burnout (4 responses) which are echoed in the following quotation from a member of staff.

> There isn't enough time. I was studying until last year. I'm not studying this year, but I'm so tired. I think this school...the primary children are so disrespectful. I don't know what happens to them when they get upstairs, but I think this probably goes back to parental attitudes. Playground duty for example... I feel like I'm a dragon all the time. I find it very tiring. Teachers get fatigued by the stress. At college I was going to do all sorts of things, but when I got into the classroom I found my ideals were far too high. I don't get the satisfaction I thought I would as a teacher. Sometimes in the staffroom a teacher will walk in so dejected because they're ready to explode. They've had it."

The constant pressure on time from priorities both within and beyond the school (and significantly from part-time study) figured very clearly in teacher discussion. As well as pressure on time from sources other than participation in SBCD, the very range of SBCD initiatives attempted had become counter-productive. Data on the number and frequency of major initiatives identified in Table 1 would support this perception. Initiatives were sometimes commenced but not acted upon consistently or developed any further because they were superseded by newer priorities. One of the teachers put the point of view explicitly:

> Things seem to start and they don't keep going. Like the discipline policy...We got a draft copy last year and its sitting in my drawer. Am I still supposed to follow that or not? Some of the things are outdated already. Revising the school policy..I'm supposed to go on that committee with the school Principal and some other teachers, but we haven't met for ages. I think it just breaks down due to

> time and people and their other things... You can't just start something and leave it. You've really got to follow it on.

In a discussion with one of the focus teachers about a Personal Development initiative in which she had previously reported being involved, she reported that nothing had happened for several weeks. When asked if the reason was time, she indicated that she had simply forgotten about it. Given the number of initiatives under consideration at any one time as identified in Table 1, and the other demands on teachers' time, this was not surprising.

Three of the seven teachers interviewed commented that the fact that BPS was a single stream school was a barrier to participation in SBCD, since there was no one else teaching the same year level with whom issues could be discussed. This factor is likely to be important for any school of similar size. Five of the eight barriers to participation in SBCD perceived by teachers at BPS were related to either the demands on time or the consequences of these demands. These barriers were lack of time, conflicting priorities, part-time study, staff burn out and lack of follow through on initiatives. In fact if the number of responses related to consequences of lack of time are summed, these can be seen to be more important than the lack of time itself.

While there seem to be more barriers than aids to participation in SBCD, much SBCD activity took place in the school during the period of observation. Results of a questionnaire (reported in Bezzina, 1989) reveal that in general, teachers were positively disposed to participate in SBCD. Explanations for this could be that participation was expected of staff, that it was one of the norms of the occupation, that the aids must have been stronger than the barriers in the minds of most teachers, or that the perceived advantages of participation outweighed the disadvantages for them. This issue is explored more fully in the report of the larger study of which this report forms a part (Bezzina, 1989).

Advantages and disadvantages of participation at BPS.

In interviews with teachers at BPS, one disadvantage and 5 advantages of participation in SBCD emerged. The only disadvantage identified was the time taken. This factor has already been discussed.

The advantages identified are listed in Table 4, with an indication of the frequency of mention.

TABLE 4 : TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATION IN SBCD AT BPS

Factor	Number of responses
Better response to needs/situation	3
Allows better awareness of curriculum among staff	3
Allows staff to share/work together	2
Allows consistency in curriculum structure	2
Is a form of staff development	1
Not sure	1

Four respondents identified a single advantage, two identified two, and the seventh identified three. Given that there was a considerable allocation of scarce time and energy to participation in SBCD, the advantages listed in Table 4 must have been of sufficient value to respondents to encourage them to overcome the various barriers posed by the lack of time and the disadvantage which the expenditure of time seemed to pose. Three of the five advantages of participation in SBCD which were identified related to the curriculum (staff awareness of, and consistency in structure) and its outcomes (better response to needs).

Other observations about SBCD

In the course of interviews and observations, some additional perceptions emerged about the opinions of parents and the role of the teacher as the final judge of what is taught.

All teachers interviewed expressed an opinion that parents might find either the process or the content of SBCD initiatives difficult to deal with. They felt under no obligation, however, to change their practice as a result of this. Teachers clearly felt that they were in the best position to make the appropriate judgements. One teacher, when asked whether the perceptions of parents would have any influence on her practice of SBCD, replied:

> No, because..I think you've got to take into account their feelings, and then you've got to do what you're doing or you've got in mind, and you've got to carry them with you but you can't stop progress. If we're going to do it it's because we think its going to be better for the children, so you've got to get that idea over to the parents.

While there was unanimity about the extent to which the opinions of parents ought to influence participation in SBCD, two teachers took this independent position further in arguing that they did not feel constrained by the school based curriculum where they felt that this was not in the best interests of their classes. One stated:

> Even though it was supposed to be a school based thing, I didn't do it because I didn't feel it was right for the children at the time.

The major concern among staff who took this stand was always what would be best for their classes. The perception that parents' opinions need not be considered seemed to be based on a conviction that these opinions could not improve curriculum, and the importance of improved curriculum as an advantage was demonstrated in Table 4.

It is of note that the action taken by the teachers when they did not think that school policy was in their pupils' best interests was to change their implementation practice. They made no mention of any attempt to review current policy to bring it more into line with perceived needs. It seems that teachers might have perceived the documents and the process of planning as end points, and as somehow unrelated to the act of teaching. This lack of connection has already been noted , where no teacher at BPS indicated implementation as one of the component activities of SBCD.

The observations in this section point to a desire among teachers to have responsibility for deciding what is to be taught to their classes. They were prepared to implement SBCD in ways which went against the advice of parents, advisers, and even collaboratively devised school policies in particular instances where they considered it was in the best interests of their pupils. The comments made by teachers indicate that this was not a desire to control for its own sake, but rather it was a desire to implement what was best, appropriate and relevant for their own classes. This is in line with the importance attached to the meeting of needs as an advantage of SBCD (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The practice of SBCD at BPS can be summarised as follows. There was a great deal of activity in a range of subject areas, with teachers involved in all new initiatives in at

least the planning stages. The Principal established structures which provided for additional time and support from outside experts. Despite all this, some initiatives lapsed in the planning stages, and others were not finding expression in the classroom.

Teachers perceptions indicate that they did not see implementation as part of participation in SBCD, and that they had a limited view of what was involved in such participation. The benefits of SBCD were seen as largely related to improved curriculum rather than to personal benefits for the teachers. Despite the provision of additional time at BPS, lack of time and conflicting priorities presented the greatest set of barriers to participation in SBCD, while the Principal was seen as the greatest aid. Another significant barrier was the lack of follow through on initiatives. Teachers chose to depart from school policy in their teaching rather than to modify it where they felt that it was not in the best interests of their students.

To some degree teachers' perspectives at BPS are not unexpected. Cohen and Harrison (1982) and Brady (1986) have noted the significance of lack of time. Prideaux (1983) highlighted the important role of the principal. Conflicting priorities have been identified as a cost to the individual by Pitt and Jennings (1984). There are, however, some findings which are less predictable from previous research.

Many claims about the benefits of SBCD are made in the literature. For the individual, for example, it has been shown to increase job-satisfaction (Bezzina, 1983; Imber, 1983) and to enhance feelings of ownership and self-efficacy (Duke,Showers and Imber,1980). For the school it produces such benefits as better and more effective decisions (Pitt and Jennings, 1984; Cohen and Harrison, 1982), improved student outcomes (Nettle, 1981) and increased commitment from participants (Imber, 1983). It is significant that advantages identified by teachers at BPS focussed on curriculum and outcomes to the exclusion of benefits which might accrue direct to the individual.

A second area in which the results are of particular interest is the parallel between perception and practice in terms of the disjuncture between the uptake of initiatives and their implementation. In terms of perception, implementation was not suggested by teachers as a behaviour which was part of SBCD. In practice, the production of curriculum documents or policies seemed to be treated as an end in itself. Such policies could be (and were, at times) ignored when teachers made decisions about what was best for their students. Where the collaboratively designed curriculum was seen as inappropriate, teachers chose to change practice rather than policy. It may be that the limited ability of teachers to discuss what is involved in participation in SBCD has been

reflected in their practice. If teachers have no coherent model of how to proceed perhaps this limits their ability to do so. In theory and in practice, SBCD and what teachers did in the classroom were not necessarily related. Thus the considerable time and effort expended on SBCD was, in some cases at least, wasted.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has served two purposes. At a descriptive level it has provided some insights into both the practice of SBCD in a small Primary school, and into the perceptions of teachers in that school. At a more analytic level it has attempted to draw some parallels between the practice of SBCD in that school and teachers' perceptions of that behaviour.

Blackpool Primary School is a place in which a great deal was attempted by way of SBCD, but where several of the initiatives failed to make an impact on classroom practice. One explanation for these "failures" is that the reach of those in the school had exceeded their grasp, that they had tried to do too much. There is no doubt that this is true and that the roles of the Principal and external influences in this regard were significant. However, the parallels which emerged between practice and perception point to other possible explanations. If teachers perceive the job to be finished when the school curriculum sits on the Principal's desk, then it is not surprising that this curriculum is not finding a place in practice. If teachers do not have a coherent view of methodologies for SBCD, in the same way as they have methodologies for teaching, then it is not surprising that their execution is flawed.

Both of these alternative explanations have serious implications for those of us who are involved in the teaching of curriculum development. If the teachers at Blackpool Primary School were typical in their perceptions, then there is clearly a need for us to explore the link between curriculum planning and curriculum implementation more closely with our students. There is also a need for us to consider why our graduates can discuss in some detail component behaviours of the act of teaching, but are less able, in response to open-ended questions to articulate what is involved in school based curriculum development. More generally, we need both to extend our understanding of teachers' perceptions of their participation in SBCD beyond the bounds of a single school, and to develop more comprehensive ways of understanding the nature of these perceptions and their relationship to SBCD behaviour.

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